

PREFACE

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WHEN the Champlain Society was first organised in 1905 one of the works on its list of proposed publications was the *Journal* of Samuel Hearne. This book, written with great literary charm, is the first account preserved to us of an attempt to explore the interior of far-northern Canada from a base on Hudson Bay. The natives had brought to Fort Prince of Wales glowing reports of a vast store of copper at the mouth of a river which flowed into the Arctic Ocean. An attempt to find it was inevitable. Twice Hearne failed, but his third effort succeeded and, after a laborious journey, he reached the mouth of the Coppermine River. Soon after he was promoted to command at Fort Prince of Wales, now Churchill, on Hudson Bay. France had joined Britain's revolted colonies in their war on the mother land, and one day, in 1782, a French squadron, under the well-known seaman, La Perouse, dropped anchor before Fort Prince of Wales. Hearne, mightier with the pen than with the sword, surrendered meekly enough in spite of his massive walls from thirty to forty feet thick. Thus ingloriously he dies out of history.

Hearne's *Journal*, published after his early death, has become a rather rare book. Besides the narrative of what he did, it contains copious notes on the natural history of the region which he was the first white man to make known.